

UNCLAS ABU DHABI 002240

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: OIIP KMDR AE KPAO TC

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: ARABS AND U.S. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

11. SUMMARY: An Egyptian columnist in "Akhbar Al-Arab" concludes that America's efforts to win the minds and hearts of the Arabs has failed. A UAE female professor in "Al-Bayan" wonders whether U.S. public diplomacy efforts will succeed in light of the decades of hostile policies, misery and bad treatment from America. End summary.

12. Under the headline "America has lost its war for the hearts and minds!", an Egyptian columnist, Mahmoud Ahmed, wrote a 5/30 op-ed in Abu Dhabi-based pan-Arab daily "Akhbar Al-Arab" (circulation 20,000):

"...Since the inception of the war on terror waged by the United States... specialists in the U.S. administration have worked to win the battle for hearts and minds... The U.S. administration admitted the fact that it is losing this battle through Donald Rumsfeld on Feb 17 when he said that the United States is losing its war of propaganda against Al Qaeda and other enemies... BBC's correspondent "Paul Wood" reported in his coverage on the war in Iraq. He said that one day he was accompanying an American convoy assigned to contact some Iraqi families in Mosul in a mission to win their hearts after an incident where their sons were arrested by the U.S. forces. These forces were to visit the mothers and give their children footballs. One soldier held a clear plastic sack of bright silver footballs. While the children got excited, the mothers said they were against Saddam and plead with the Americans soldiers to release her sons. After the visit ended, the American soldiers left the house. Some children started running after the soldiers' vehicle; one of them threw stones at them. Some Iraqi Security officers came to help and chased those children; the children who until a few seconds ago had been waving and smiling now fled in terror. The BBC correspondent concluded that such incidents are an indication of how the mood can change in a second. Though this is only one story, it shows how the Americans have lost the battle for hearts and minds."

13. Under headline "Can public diplomacy rectify what U.S. policy has ruined?", a UAE professor, Nisreen Murad, wrote 5/30 op-ed in Dubai-based Arabic daily "Al-Bayan," (circulation 90,000):

"... American foreign policies are no less horrible towards Arab countries than to Palestine, whether friendly or unfriendly. The American armada besieged Iraq for more than 12 years. Sanctions caused the deaths of more than one and a half million Iraqis, mostly children, old people, women and the unborn. The policies of the United States follow the same approach of blatantly interfering in the affairs of Somalia, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Algeria and other countries. Its efforts seem focused towards containing the Arab world as if it were a vacuum that needs to be inflated with cultural and materialistic things that do not fulfill the need for independence and freedom. Currently, the Bush administration is waging a public diplomacy propaganda effort seeking to polish the face of U.S. foreign affairs. The American administration, in this direction, released a small booklet containing instructions to normal Americans guiding them on how to act when they meet with Arabs. The booklet advises Americans to smile a lot, listen, be positive and give advise, be patient and cooperative. In closing, they should warmly say goodbye hoping to see the Arab again. However against the misery and bad treatment Arabs get from Americans at sea, land and airports in addition to the many Arab lives taken away, can public diplomacy do any good in the face of villainous U.S. policies?"

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